

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-20

INFO OCT-01 IO-14 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-07 H-03 INR-10

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8597

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USMISSION GENEVA

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SANTIAGO 2656

EO 11652: GDS

TAGS: CI, PINT, SOCI

SUBJ: CONSERVATIVE BISHOP DEFENDS JUNTA

REF: SANTIAGO 2212

1. SUMMARY. CONSERVATIVE BISHOP OF VALPARAISO HAS ISSUED STRONG STATEMENT LAUDING JUNTA AND INVEIGHING AGAINST MARXIST AGGRESSION AS MAJOR OBSTACLE TO CHILEAN RECONCILIATION. DOCUMENT BEING INTERPRETED AS IMPLICIT REBUKE OF RECENT CHILEAN BISHOPS' DECLARATION WHICH CRITICIZED JUNTA FOR HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS. AS SUCH, IT HAS CAUSED DISTRESS IN LIBERAL CHURCH CIRCLES AND PDC AND IS BEING HEAVILY PLAYED UP BY GOVT AND ITS SUPPORTERS. END SUMMARY.

2. ARCHBISHOP EMILIO TAGLE OF VALPARAISO (CHILE'S SECOND LARGEST CITY), WELL KNOWN FOR HIS UNSTINTED OPPOSITION TO ALLENDE GOVT AND HIS GENERALLY CONSERVATIVE RELIGIOUS AND POLITICAL VIEWS, HAS MADE PUBLIC PASTORAL LETTER WHICH WILL BE READ TO VALPARAISO CONGREGATIONS SUNDAY, MAY 26. DOCUMENT APPLAUDS ARMED FORCES FOR ASSUMING POWER AND STRONGLY DEFENDS JUNTA GOVT.

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3. IN CERTAIN SUPERFICIAL ASPECTS, NOTABLY EMPHASIS ON NATIONAL

RECONCILIATION, SPECIAL PREOCCUPATION OF CHURCH FOR POOR, AND NEED TO RECOGNIZE DIGNITY AND RIGHTS OF ALL, TAGLE'S DECLARATION RESEMBLES CHILEAN BISHOPS' STATEMENT ISSUED APRIL 24 (REFTEL). HOWEVER, ITS SIGNIFICANCE LIES NOT IN ITS SIMILARITIES BUT RATHER IN ITS DIFFERENCES WITH BISHOPS' STATEMENT, WHICH REFLECT DIVISIONS WITHIN CHURCH. MAJORITY OF CHILEAN BISHOPS HAD PLACED ON GOVT MAJOR ONUS FOR LACK OF NATIONAL RECONCILIATION AND, IN PARTICULAR, FOR CONTINUED VIOLATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS AND RESULTANT REIGN OF "CLIMATE OF INSECURITY AND FEAR."

4. TAGLE, ON OTHER HAND, LAUDS ARMED FORCES AS "GUARDIANS OF SECURITY AND HONOR OF CHILE" AND PRAISES THEM FOR "LEGITIMATELY ASSUMING GOVT." FURTHER, HE ARGUED THAT "MAJOR OBSTACLE TO NATIONAL RECONCILIATION" IS DOMESTIC AND INTERNATIONAL MARXIST AGGRESSION. NEVERTHELESS, HE NOTES, NOW "THERE IS ORDER, WORK, STUDY, HONESTY" AND COUNTRY ON ROAD TO RECONSTRUCTION FREE OF FOREIGN IDEOLOGIES."

5. TAGLE'S STATEMENT RECEIVED INSIDE PAGE COVERAGE IN ALL SANTIAGO DAILIES EXCEPT GOVT MOUTHPIECE LA PATRIA WHICH HEADLINED IT ON FRONT PAGE. SIMILARLY, RIGHTISTRADIO AGRICULTURA WHICH DIRECTED BY JUNTA COMMUNICATIONS AND POLITICAL ADVISER, ALVARO PUGA, GAVE STATEMENT HEAVY PLAY.

6. IN CONVERSATIONS WITH EMBOFFS, SOURCES WITHIN LIBERAL CHURCH CIRCLES AND CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATIC PARTY CHARACTERIZED STATEMENT AS "DEPLORABLE." SOURCES INDICATED THAT TAGLE ONE OF ONLY THREE BISHOPS WHO OPPOSED ISSUANCE OF BISHOPS' APRIL 24. STATEMENT. (THIS AT VARIANCE WITH REPORTS FROM GOVT ADHERENTS WHICH EMBASSY HAS RECEIVED THAT APPROXIMATELY ONE-THIRD OF 28 BISHOPS HAD OPPOSED ISSUANCE OF THAT DOCUMENT.)

7. WHATEVER THE NUMBER OF BISHOPS WHO SUPPORT TAGLE'S VIEW, IT IS CLEAR THAT THEY ARE IN THE MINORITY AND THAT CARDINAL ENJOYS SUPPORT OF STRONG MAJORITY OF BISHOPS. TAGLE'S STATEMENT NEVERTHELESS DOES CALL ATTENTION TO DIVISION WHICH EXISTS WITHIN THE CHURCH. MANNER IN WHICH GOVT MEDIA HAVE HANDLED IT REFLECTIVE OF GOC'S DETERMINATION TO UNDERCUT CHURCH CRITICISM BY EXPLOITING ALL EVIDENCE OF SUPPORT FOR JUNTA EMANATING FROM INDIVIDUAL CHURCH LEADERS.

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